

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Revisions to Kentucky's Accountability System

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 158.6453, 703 KAR 5:020

History/Background:

Existing Policy. In 2004, the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) began to engage in deliberate conversations around moving the state assessment program forward in anticipation that assessment contracts would soon expire. A structure for guiding the conversation was the document titled “Seven Steps Forward in Assessment” that outlined a number of enhancements and future goals for the state assessment system. As the KBE listened to the field and policymakers and considered legal requirements in Kentucky statute and No Child Left Behind, new directions for the system emerged. The outcome of these multiple-year conversations and subsequent board decisions has been new assessment contracts that will continue the state assessment program in a redesigned format.

Additionally, Senate Bill 130 added the ACT for students at grade 11 and optional WorkKeys assessments to the EXPLORE and PLAN readiness assessments included in the CATS assessment Request for Proposal (RFP). The bill also included requirements on accommodations, reporting, student interventions, cost, alignment studies and subsequent reduction of items on the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT), and technical advice. The new assessment contracts now serve as the vehicles to implement the decisions of the Kentucky Board of Education and actions of the 2006 Kentucky General Assembly that have enhanced the assessment program with several new components.

Since the inception of a state assessment and accountability program with the passage of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), the accountability focus has remained primarily school-based with recognition and sanctions attached to school results. The KBE adopted a growth model with performance of schools serving as their own baseline. All students and thus all schools are expected to demonstrate improvement within the system.

The overriding goal of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) is for all schools in Kentucky to reach Proficiency as defined by the KBE. The accountability system provides the mechanism for measuring this goal and thus provides feedback to schools on how they are progressing. Proficiency for a school is represented as an accountability index of 100 by 2014. The Kentucky Accountability Index includes both

academic and nonacademic measures. These multiple measures provide a “snapshot” of schools and communicate the importance of each measure in terms of resources and instructional programs.

Now that the new assessment components and timelines for their implementation are mostly in place, the important task continues to be determining how the assessment components will be reflected in the accountability system. Adding components to the assessment system provides not only the opportunity to improve the measurement of school and student performance, but the ability to determine how assessment components become part of the calculation of the accountability index.

Policy Issue(s):

The Kentucky Board of Education began in August a decision process regarding revisions to the accountability system. Since the state assessment and accountability system provides the means to report results on both state and federal performance targets and the consequences for not achieving goals, issues around effectively managing changes to the system become critical. As 2014 is now a mere eight years away, it is vital that during the process of system change, fairness, continuity, and stability are maintained as much as possible and that schools and districts are provided the direction and time necessary to adjust and modify their programs appropriately.

At the August KBE meeting, board members reviewed several possible options for the accountability system under the three major areas that combine to create the composite Accountability Index: 1) Academic Index, 2) Nonacademic Index, and 3) the Norm-Referenced Test Index. During the September KBE meeting, staff further refined and simplified the options introduced in August into key questions regarding the structure of the accountability system.

Since the last accountability discussion, staff has participated in multiple conversations with stakeholders regarding the options presented and discussed at the September KBE meeting. These conversations with practitioners in the field, the National Technical Advisory Panel on Assessment and Accountability (NTAPAA), the School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council (SCAAC), Local Superintendents Advisory Council (LSAC), Commissioner's Superintendents Advisory Council, Commissioner's Principals Advisory Council and the Kentucky Association of Assessment Coordinators, have been thoughtful and rich. They have introduced new ideas and suggestions that have pushed the thinking of staff and ultimately will provide KBE more ideas to consider as it continues the decision making process regarding how academic and nonacademic factors should be reflected in the accountability system on October 4.

To assist KBE with the continuing accountability discussion, a modified version of the PowerPoint presentation used in September has been created. (See Attachment A.) Added to slightly refined key questions, legal parameters, staff recommendations with rationale, and calculation information are the reactions gathered from KBE in September, Kentucky Educators, and the National Technical Advisory Panel for Assessment and

Accountability. In some instances, the information gained from the conversations with stakeholders has led staff to submit a revised recommendation for Board consideration in October. In other cases, the recommendation from September remains in place. A notation is made to clearly designate when a recommendation has been revised.

For each question, the grade spans impacted are noted and an identification label of *weight, measure, or both* is applied. A weight question targets the percentage at which a component should be included in the accountability formula. A measure question focuses on the method for collecting data to use in calculating the accountability component.

Key questions include:

Academic Index

1. Should the weight of KCCT reading and mathematics be increased?
 - a. Should accountability calculations include a measure of growth using grade-to-grade assessments in reading and mathematics (3—8) when longitudinal data is cumulated?
2. Should the focus on all content areas be maintained?
 - a. Should items from the ACT be utilized and augmented with items from the Kentucky Core Content Test to calculate indices for reading, mathematics, science and on-demand writing?

Norm-referenced Index

1. Should a Norm-Referenced Index be included at elementary and middle school?
2. Should a national comparison measure using PLAN and ACT composite scores be included norms be included? *(Question is combination of two questions from September.)*

Nonacademic Index

1. Should the total weight of the Nonacademic Index and the distribution of weights within the index be changed?
 - a. How should attendance be measured?
 - b. Should retention at elementary and middle school and dropout at middle school be captured in a rate that reflects the number of years students use to complete each school level?
 - c. Beginning in 2007-08, should Graduation Rate be used to capture both Dropout and Retention?
 - Should Kentucky values be added to this weight? *(new question)*
 - d. Should ACT, WorkKeys, and Advanced Placement exams be included as measures of successful Transition to Adult Life?

Again, we have included the same pie charts (Attachment B) presented to the Board in September as a point of reference. The three pie charts reflect current accountability weights (1998-2006) for elementary, middle and high schools and proposed weights for 2007-Beyond (as presented in September). As you make decisions on the key questions outlined above, the pie charts will need to be altered.

KDE looks to the KBE for guidance as each question with reactions is considered, and as other related issues emerge in the conversation. The questions and reactions have introduced several ideas and refined others that will require time for full implementation to occur. KDE will need to continue evaluating data collection methods and their impact, seeking the advice of the technical and psychometric communities, and requesting approval of the United States Department of Education if NCLB reporting and compliance are impacted.

Staff had been preparing toward a first reading of revisions to the accountability regulations by the KBE in October; however, the reactions and conversations with multiple groups interjected important information for the Board to consider in the decision making process that will affect the specific language to be inserted into the regulations. Staff also realizes the Board's desire to have as much information as possible from stakeholders as it makes decisions. Since, the KBE has scheduled a November 1 meeting, the October discussion will be used to inform staff's revisions to the regulations, which will come forward for review on November 1 with a target of final approval at the December KBE meeting.

Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:

Practitioners in the field

National Technical Advisory Panel on Assessment and Accountability (NTAPAA)

School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council (SCAAC)

Local Superintendents Advisory Council (LSAC)

Commissioner's Superintendents Advisory Council

Commissioner's Principals Advisory Council

Kentucky Association of Assessment Coordinators

Some of the feedback is reflected in the attached PowerPoint and other input will be reported at the October meeting.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

As Kentucky's assessment and accountability system transitions to incorporate new assessments and changes to the accountability program, an important consideration will be how to build the system while allowing schools and districts the capacity to manage the change. Clear expectations are a key to focusing work toward school and student proficiency and reasonable timelines will enable schools and districts to implement change effectively.

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Commissioner of Education

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